

June 26, 1967

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Dear Johnnie:

I came back from my trip to find your letter of May 18 waiting for me. How delightful to have met you on the trip that you referred to in your letter! What a treat to see all of you again, and, if I may say so, especially Betty and Sally. I am sorry we didn't have a chance to spend even a little more time together. Did you ever get back to Milan and Pavia? Betty Ryan will probably have told you that I ran into her in New York on my way back. So altogether this has been a sentimental journey. However, I didn't quite make it to Israel (to see my parents) on this trip. I'll tell you more about it some time, and merely remark that while I didn't get to Tel Aviv, my baggage did. But that eventually came back too.

As to defining an ivory tower: I was perhaps a little bashful about presenting requirements that go so far beyond what is either reasonable or fairly available to others of my peers. And I would like to make it very clear that I would not seriously undertake leave from this department so long as it remains intact. We have built up a very good team, and have a strong sense of mutual responsibility, accordingly. However, we are being constantly raided, and I am realistically concerned that one or more of our key members is likely to find some of the innumerable offers being presented to them quite irresistible, and perhaps in the not very distant future. So it is in anticipation of that unhappy likelihood that I go as far as this in discussing alternative possibilities for myself. Having said this, I feel I would not be deluding you into making a wasted effort by continuing the discussion.

Perhaps the quickest way to summarize what I might be looking for would be to allude to the job description that was published in the newspapers for Barzun, but substitute the phrase "biological science and the human condition" when needed to specify the subject discipline. I would expect, however, that a reasonable proportion of my investigative effort would be in the area of computer implementation of scientific method.

My "practical" requirements are on the one hand reasonable, on the other hand perhaps the most unattainable. I would want to see a guaranteed budget of \$300,000 annually to be at my disposal and to cover essentially the total cost of my investigative efforts. This would include my own salary, office assistance, laboratory, etc., and should have some provision for gradual escalation in proportion to the over-all cost of scientific effort throughout the country. I had once mentioned an endowment, but this is really of no concern to me. In fact,

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the absolute condition that I would place on this part of it is that I have no thought or responsibility whatsoever for applying any administrative effort of any kind in raising or accounting for the use of these funds. By this, I explicitly mean that I would not be obliged to make any energy-consuming efforts whatever in making applications to government agencies, etc.

On the other hand, I would have to concede that cooperation in social justification and fund raising does eventually become a significant responsibility of senior faculty members, and I would be happy to do my part on behalf of the entire University, as distinguished from my personal activity.

My salary requirements in gross numbers may end up seeming rather high, but they would be encompassed within the total budget I mentioned previously. I would add, however, that I do have a considerable income from extracurricular activities, and would be happy to promote the pattern, which I believe to be desirable, in principle, of assigning all such income to the University, in exchange for a negotiated level of compensation that reflected what a professor ought to be worth in economic terms.

After these remarks you might think that I am certainly trying to pad that ivory tower very comfortably; however, I am concerned that my personal financial problems also furnish one more distraction to the concentration of intellectual effort that I would deeply wish to be engaged in.

It is hard for me to see any compelling reason for us to meet together in person before next October, unless perhaps there is some miracle whereby you would be able to say that Columbia is ready to proceed along these lines. I really am not that ready to move in my own thinking on such a project, and indeed would probably prefer not to be any more deeply engaged in such a distraction until there was a substantial initiative on Columbia's part.

I would prefer that you keep this letter, as such, a private matter, although I would be very happy if you would paraphrase it according to your own judgment for any presentation you might wish to make to the administration. I have not thought out the details of the ivory tower plan so carefully that I would be willing to regard any statement I made as being formally correct.

I am indeed heartened by the changes that have been announced for Columbia, and I think I can agree with you that you can look forward to a much brighter period in its affairs.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

P.S. I also ran into Ed Tatum on the way back, and without referring to any specific institution (the University of Wisconsin has been making some comparable noises), Ed commented "Me, too!" Actually, I think it quite possible that a rather

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long line might form in response to opportunities of the kind that I have just outlined, and this is of course one of the problems. However, you would certainly be foolish not to attempt to cultivate Ed's interest in a change.